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'Peaceniks' just dupes for dictator

By FREDRIC DICKER
THE self-styled "peace activists" who provoked the potentially explosive incident along the Nicaraguan-Costa Rican border are actually Sandinista dupes and apologists for the Nicaraguan dictatorship.

That's the view of long-time Nicaragua watchers both inside and outside of the U.S. government.

They note that the group, Witness for Peace, has done little to hide its sympathies for the ruling Sandinistas' cause.

And it has done nothing to actively protest brutal Sandinista aggressions against Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indian populations on Nicaragua's east coast, or the government's forced eviction of thousands of innocent peasants.

Witness for Peace was founded two years ago by a group of liberal-to-left-wing



Abducted New Yorkers Rev. G. Shubert Frey (left) and Rev. Thomas Fenton.

activists, some with radical "Liberation Theology" Catholic Church connections, bent on helping "protect" the Marxist Sandinistas from assault by U.S.-backed forces. Today, it sends cadres of Americans into Nicaragua for short, sanitized visits, then uses them to propagandize for the Sandinista cause when

they return to the U.S. The insiders said there's little doubt there on the San Juan River had the explicit approval of Nicaragua's Marxist leaders, a tipoff to the group's intentions. "This is good public relations for the Sandinistas — the poor peace activists in the hands of the evil Contras," said one U.S. official.

"Democratic Costa Rica, which supports the U.S., is embarrassed because it looks like they can't control their borders. And the Russians can have a field day."

Intelligence sources said there also was a good chance that some of the Nicaraguan "journalists" traveling with the group were actually Sandinista spies.

"This would have been a good opportunity for the Sandinistas to get some on-site intelligence about rebel formations and troop strength along the river," said one intelligence expert.

"Either way, the Sandinistas win with this group. If Witness for Peace was seized, then it makes the contras look like bad guys.

"And if the group had made it down the river, they would have picked up some important intelligence information."